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Part 2 PSYCHO-CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

128 THE purpose of this portion of the volume is to draw together the material on childhood and child training and to attempt to show how it can be synthesized with adult behavior and values as well as with institutional forms. Formalized and unformalized behaviors are discussed in the order in which the growing Atimelanger encounters them. It will be necessary to interweave the strands, many of which will have to be carried continuously throughout the material. However, certain age groupings and associated emphases are possible. For example, the period of infancy lends itself to a discussion of the influence of orifice psychology and the gratifications or frustrations of physiological needs and tensions. Early and late childhood are best associated with the discussion of discipline. Adolescence in this culture is the period when adjustments to adult values begin to loom large. Adulthood presents the possibility for working out early conditioning and cultural values in terms of institutions and status positions.

Chapter 3

Infancy: From Birth to Walking

956 THE physiological theories of conception and fetal life in Atimelang will be discussed later in a section on sexual behavior and attitudes. Parental attitudes and behavior immediately before, during, and subsequent to birth will be described here only in so far as they impinge on the development of the infant. Within the infancy period Atimelangers recognize a series of stages: from birth to the first smile, from the first smile to sitting up alone or crawling, from crawling to walking. The actual age in months or years is of no concern. In fact, it is very difficult for the average mother to count back through the number of gardens she has planted, in order to tell you whether her child was born even three or four years ago. Therefore, ages given throughout this volume are only rough estimates.

THE CONFINEMENT

843 183 Pregnancy and actual birth are not surrounded with many observances, and precautions vary with individuals both in kind and in the strictness with which they are followed. For instance, intercourse be-

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tween husband and wife should stop as soon as the wife knows she is pregnant, that is, when she ceases to have monthly periods. With a very young wife who becomes pregnant before her first menses, intercourse should stop when she first notes the physiological changes accompanying pregnancy. In actual practice, however, a husband sometimes has intercourse with his wife until the last month of pregnancy. This is often true for young men who do not have second wives. Older men who have been able to afford a second wife—and they are in the minority—usually take up residence with the other woman. The result in such polygynous families may be the birth of offspring to alternate wives.

A woman works all through her pregnancy, often doing fairly heavy field labor. It is recognized, however, that work which is too heavy may produce miscarriages, so that women who want children are careful not to overstrain themselves. Food preferences during pregnancy also are recognized and indulged.

There is a series of prenatal taboos, knowledge and observance of which vary greatly from individual to individual. They apply primarily to the mother, but there are one or two applicable to the father as well. For instance, a pregnant woman should not place a new pot on the fire, because if it blackens, her child will be born with patches of darker pigment. A pregnant woman should eat only the less desirable belly portions of rats. If she eats the hind- and forequarters, her child's limbs will spread at birth like those of a rat spitted for roasting. A man should not straighten arrows during his wife's pregnancy, for the child would then be born with eyes rolled to one side. However, after straightening an arrow shaft the father can rub it on his wife's abdomen and the child's eyes will straighten.

There are many such superstitions, but their weight and importance seem no greater than comparable ones in our own society. It is worth noting, however, that these prenatal influences indicate a sense of close intimacy between children and parents and that often there are antidotes for harmful acts. The sense of intimate physiological connection between mother and child persists after birth, so that mothers who were nursing sick infants came to me for medicine they could take in order to cure their children. I could discover no parallel native medication, however.

When labor pains begin, the mother goes to the house of a kinswoman if possible. If no kinswoman's house is near by, she may give birth in her own home. Usually the husband is not present, merely as a matter of good form, although there is no strict rule on this point. The

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838 not hang back or seem ashamed. He was very lucky at raising pigs, so a man from Atimelang wanted to marry him. He too wanted to marry that man. So the man from Atimelang paid a two-dollar-and-fifty-cent moko for him and tried to sleep with him but could not. Then the man said to Alurkaseni's brother, 'I won't have children if I stay with him, so you had better pay back my moko.'

"After that they changed him into a man. He was about twelve then. His older brothers taught him to shoot and make war. When he was just learning, people laughed at him but soon he was very skillful and then people didn't laugh at him any more. People would test him. They would send him to cut beams. With just a few strokes on both sides of a tree, he would fell it. Then people would say, 'This is a very strong man.' He was brave and would lead war parties. He became a killer (*liki*, a title of distinction). Once when a man slept with his nephew's wife, he led all the other kin in avenging the matter by going out into the adulterer's field, chopping down his crop, and burning down his house.

"He built himself a house and lived alone. He worked in the fields and cooked for himself. He could pound rice just like a woman.

"When he was middle aged, people said, 'He should not be single. Let's give him a widow.' So they gave him Kolmani, who already had grown children. He wanted to sleep with her and she wanted to sleep with him, but he couldn't. She was happy to stay with him anyhow. He just bought her in vain. He paid her bride-price and gave her parents' death feasts for her."

841 In connection with sex behavior and attitudes there are some further topics that deserve comment. Women's menstrual periods have already been referred to as passing with a minimum of observances and notice. The only terms for menses that I procured were euphemistic ones, "my friend" or "headache." In a subsequent section it will be seen that the monthly flow is attributed to the breaking of egglike structures in the breast, which are then discharged. Women use dry, porous banana bark as pads. These are then thrown away in some distant place. No one is supposed to see them, not even a kinswoman. During her periods a woman should wear a shawl that covers her body more completely and prevents any possible detection of stains on her loincloth. The number of days between periods is not known. Instead a woman approximates the onset of her periods by the recurrence of the phase of the moon during which her last period occurred. The cessation of menses is recognized as the beginning of pregnancy. During menstruation women are not supposed to feel sexual desires and similarly men

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IDEAS OF PROCREATION

842 The ideas of the physiology of procreation in Atimelang and their relationship to sexual morality deserve some detailed consideration. A child is thought to be formed from an accumulation of seminal and menstrual fluids in the mother—and menstrual fluid is considered the result of "things in a woman's breasts like eggs, which break and run down into her abdomen." For the first two months the child is believed
843 to remain in liquid form. It is during this period that the mother develops food preferences. In the third month pieces of flesh begin to solidify, and the mother feels dizzy and nauseated. In the fourth month the child's feet are formed, and a tiny placental cord appears.

At this time the fetus is said to resemble a banana blossom. This is also the period when the mother begins to feel movement. In the fifth month the fetus has solidified as far as its abdomen and begins to kick slowly and gently. In the sixth month the whole body is formed, but the ears, mouth, nose, and genitals are rudimentary. In the seventh month features begin to acquire flesh and prominence, and in the eighth month the child is complete and begins to jump about. In the ninth month even its nails are there, and "the child kicks until its mother is terribly sick. It kicks itself out of the mother's body; it tears its nest (placenta) and so has to come out." This is on the whole a remarkably accurate idea of fetal development.

842 Many different bits of behavior and attitudes dovetail with this idea
836 of procreation. One of these is that repeated intercourse is necessary for conception. This in turn has its repercussion—in practice if not in theory—on sex morality. In theory, a young unmarried woman should be a virgin, although there is no idea of virginity tests at the time of marriage. However, should a husband shortly after marriage develop
753 feelings of nausea and a sense of discomfort just under the sternum, he will consult a seer. If the seer extracts a small piece of the fringe from a man's loincloth, this is considered a sign of the wife's premarital infidelity. The diagnosis of the difficulty is usually made by the patient. Nevertheless, the seer's role in fostering social conformity is not inconsiderable.

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684 Incidentally, infidelity, as previously noted, may affect children and the marriage partner in this fashion at any time during the earlier years of marital adjustment. It is a nice expression of the hostility and yet of the basic bond among members of the biologic family. Also, a difficult
[845] first birth is considered a sign of premarital unchastity. In one such case the tumukun was threatened with death by the irate husbands of a pair

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from people's gardens. Men from whose gardens she has stolen sleep with her as payment for the food she has taken. Very many older men sleep with her, but young men are not brave enough."

Reasons for the lack of illegitimate children are not hard to find. If Ashley-Montague's* suggestions are correct, it is quite possible that fertility is low at the period when young girls are indulging in premarital sexual activities. Further, mechanical abortions are practiced, and a pregnant girl would probably attempt to avoid difficulties by a deliberate and early miscarriage. Although the society does not approve, married women, particularly older ones, make no very great secret of the fact that they avoid unwanted children by very vigorous labor or by even more deliberate attempts, like jumping repeatedly from a tree or rock or by jolting themselves in a squatting position against a stone. It is felt that these practices are most efficacious in the first two or three months, when the child is still in liquid form. Probably the accuracy of ideas on fetal development can be attributed in part to the practice of abortions.

There are also "medicines" that are supposed to reduce the menstrual flow, delay conception, and actually produce barrenness. In addition, women class themselves as "long conceivers" (*pol lobu*) and "short conceivers" (*pol bui*). To be a long conceiver is considered an advantage. When a young man's wife fails to conceive after a year or two, he frequently becomes suspicious of her and may accuse her of having taken a medicine to cause barrenness. "A man will then beat his wife, and if she has taken such a medicine, she has to ask some older woman for the antidote."

"Medicine" for any of the three purposes mentioned above seems to belong more to the realm of magic than to that of effective pharmacology. Most procedures consist of eating certain leaves, like those of a sort of maidenhair fern, in a prescribed fashion over a given number of days. Another way of producing barrenness is to drink the dirty water in which one has washed a gong. This is again a reflection of the relationship, hostile in character, between sex and wealth. Men are never considered to be sterile, and birth control measures are never used by them.

At this point I am less concerned with establishing the possible but improbable efficacy of certain leaves and procedures in reducing menstruation and in delaying or preventing conception than I am in indicating a series of attitudes. The sum of what I have said so far seems to

* M. F. Ashley-Montague, *Coming into Being among the Australian Aborigines* (New York: Dutton, 1938), pp. 242ff.

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His wife then ran off to Karieta and fought with Fungata. They came to blows, and in ripping off Fungata's necklace, Tilamau broke it. She then came back to the house, but Fantan had meanwhile hidden himself in the servants' quarters behind my house. He told Stephanus and Nitaniel (two of my boys) to tell his wife, if she came, that he was not there. His wife arrived and went directly to the servants' room and tried to pull open the door, but Fantan held it from the inside. His wife then hid quietly around the corner of the house. When Fantan came out to see where she was, she attacked him once more. He again struck her twice on the upper thighs with the rattan switch, which he was still carrying. He raised large welts and she again drew her knife. Stephanus and Nitaniel held her and got scratched in the process. Fantan ran off around the corner of the house. 159X

Meanwhile Thomas and Maleboi (two other servants) came running into the house to tell me of the fight and ask me to come out and stop it. Thomas hastened to explain that he was afraid to handle Fantan's wife roughly because she was pregnant. When I went out Fantan had just disappeared around the corner of the house. He circled the house and as I stood out back he dashed into my room, where he hid himself. As I came in he peered through a crack of the door, obviously very much afraid. All this quarrel was uncharacteristically quiet, with a minimum of shouting. [843]

Tilamau sat down near the house, crying and raging. Thomas tried to tease her back into good humor but received only two hard blows for his effort. Fantan skulked on the verandah for about two hours, while his wife lay in wait for him outside. Finally toward evening she left and he also went off.

Meanwhile Fungata had already made a litigation with the chief of Dikimpe because of her broken necklace. The chief said Tilamau would have to pay a fine; but neither Tilamau, her parents, nor Fantan would pay. So the chief of Dikimpe was angry and brought the oath stone [*namoling*] from Karieta and swore an oath, saying that they could not come to him any more to try cases. Included in his repudiation were Manifani and his brother Langmani, who were Tilamau's maternal uncles and supported her in the refusal to pay a fine. Then Fungata went to the chief of Karieta, who summoned Tilamau to attend a new trial. She refused to go. [691 695]

So early Monday morning (November 21) Fungata brought her case to the tumukun. Involved at first were only Fantan, Fungata, and Tilamau. The older and more responsible people did not appear. Fantan,